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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000410

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DEPT FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2016
TAGS: [PREF](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: LETTER FROM FM PANDEY TO A/S ROCCA ON BHUTANESE
REFUGEES

REF: KATHMANDU 216

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4(b/d)

11. (C) During a meeting on February 10, Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey gave the Ambassador a letter for Assistant Secretary Rocca in response to her December 30 letter on

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Bhutanese refugees. In his letter, Pandey thanks A/S Rocca for U.S. support to resolve the Bhutanese refugee issue. He informs her that he is writing to Bhutanese Foreign Minister Wangchuk, setting a deadline for action and advising him that Nepal is prepared to internationalize the issue if Bhutan did not take action. Post is forwarding Pandey's letter via classified pouch, registration number 5641742. See also complete text in paragraph 3. The Foreign Minister said that the Embassy in New Delhi would deliver his letter to the Bhutanese Foreign Minister. Pandey indicated that he was sending a letter similar to his letter to A/S Rocca about Bhutanese refugees to the Danish Foreign Minister for his consideration before the Geneva donors meeting on Bhutan.

12. (C) The Ambassador explained he had met with the head of the Kathmandu office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Abraham Abraham, and that Abraham hoped for quick movement on the Bhutanese refugee issue. The Ambassador noted that he and Abraham had separately talked to the Indian Ambassador Shiv Mukherjee, who had explained that, while India saw Nepal's festering refugee camps as a potential long-term problem, New Delhi was reluctant to put any pressure on the Bhutanese. Pandey opined that India had no clear suggestions for a solution on the Bhutanese refugee issue.

13. (C) Begin text of Pandey's letter as written.

February 10, 2006

Ms. Christina B. Rocca
Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs
US Department of State
Washington, D.C.
The United States of America

Dear Ms. Rocca,

I have received your letter dated December 27, 2005 in which you have expressed the US Government's willingness to extend help in resolving the long-festering problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal without further delay. We sincerely appreciate this gesture.

As you are aware, His Majesty's Government of Nepal has been making sincere efforts to resolve this humanitarian problem through the bilateral process. The refugees are fast losing hope for going back home in the absence of matching commitment on part of the Royal Government of Bhutan, which has shown hesitation to resolve the problem within the framework of bilateral talks, as is evident from its unilateral suspension of verification process. Despite our best efforts, the Royal Government of Bhutan is yet to respond to our call for an early resumption of the bilateral process, stalled since December 2003. The biggest hurdle that we face today is that the Royal Government of Bhutan has shown no interest in honouring the agreements and understandings reached between the two Governments in the past, including the one that the Bhutanese Foreign Minister has committed in writing after our meeting in New York in September. This has given rise to serious doubts whether the Royal Government of Bhutan is interested at all in finding a just and lasting solution to the refugee problem. We remain very interested in such a solution.

Recently, I have met the Bhutanese Foreign Minister on two occasions and have spoken to him on telephone as well, urging him every time to immediately take serious steps to revive the bilateral process. After my meeting with him on the sidelines of the High Level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on 14th September 2005, the Bhutanese Foreign Minister handed over to me a letter, conveying Bhutan's offer "to immediately implement the decisions reached between the two governments on Category I and Category IV of the Khudunabari Camp, and to deal with Category II after resolving Categories I and IV". I waited till we met again in November last year in Dhaka on the sidelines of the meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers where I reminded him of the written commitment he made earlier. I conveyed to him in clearer terms that the Bhutanese side must understand that there is a limit of

patience and that His Majesty's Government expects nothing less than a fixed deadline for the implementation process to start as expressed by the Bhutanese side. The Bhutanese Foreign Minister has not responded as of today. Given Bhutan's obstinate attitude, we now have come to realize that our sole and sincere dependence on bilateral process will not make any headway towards resolving the problem. I am writing to my Bhutanese counterpart to set a deadline for action, advising him that otherwise we are prepared to internationalize the issue.

The indefinite languishing of the refugees in camps in Nepal has not only created burden for us in economic, social and environmental terms, but is also likely to invite serious security challenges. You are aware that the Kingdom of Nepal is fighting one of the deadliest forms of terrorism for over a decade now. There is a high risk that the refugee suffering as they are from an endless desperation could be lured by terrorists in pursuit of their malicious objectives of turning South Asia into a compact revolutionary zone as reportedly endorsed by the conglomeration of South Asian Maoists and other left wing radical groups, known as CCOMPOSA, with serious consequences also spilling over into Bhutan. From security point of view, any lingering of this problem is, therefore, not in the interest of all three countries- Nepal Bhutan and India, and beyond. The refugees just as they came to Nepal will have to go back home via the Indian territory, as we do not share a border with Bhutan. It is our view that the Government of India has a great role to play in facilitating our efforts given its special relationship with Bhutan based on its Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1949.

We feel that the problem of the Bhutanese refugee has not received the degree of attention it deserves from the international community. This problem has all attributes to be qualified no less than a case of "ethnic cleansing". Though the international community has done great justice to the victims of similar crime elsewhere in the world, this problem still eludes concerted international response that

can make things different. The Royal Government of Bhutan has all along demonstrated "commitment-implementation gap" which is very wide and will not be bridged unless the international community sends a clear message that what the Royal Government of Bhutan has been doing is unacceptable and runs contrary to the established humanitarian principles. We are aware that the US Government has the capacity to take a lead role in galvanizing international pressures against Bhutan, compelling it to take back all refugees without further delay and with dignity and honour. If the Royal Government of Bhutan does not respond in a timely manner, we are prepared to broaden the issue and request the international community to play a role in finding a comprehensive solution.

I have tried to explain to you, albeit in detail, our perspective on the problem as well as our expectation from the US Government and the international community at large. I thank you, once again, for having shown keen interest in resolving this humanitarian problem, which is now more than a decade old.

I look forward to sharing views with you on this critical issue as well as on other matters of mutual interest.

//s//

Ramesh Nath Pandey

End text of letter.

MORIARTY